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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 865

By DeBerry J

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Dr. Dorothy Lazine Brown, the first African American female elected to the Tennessee General Assembly.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the elected representatives of the state of Tennessee should pause to pay tribute to our own, those members from the rank and file whose good works have elevated them to almost mythic proportions, earning them legendary status during their lifetime; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Dorothy Brown is one such remarkable woman who undoubtedly deserves the reverence, respect and special commendation of this body; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Brown was the first black woman elected to the Tennessee General Assembly, serving in the House of Representatives from 1966-1968; and

WHEREAS, she retired from the practice of medicine on January 31, 2000; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Brown spent the first thirteen years of her childhood in an orphanage in Troy, New York; she states, "I grew up at a time when people said black kids couldn't learn because they're dull and stupid"; and

WHEREAS, a true visionary who is firm in her convictions, Dr. Brown has never shied away from bringing the tough issues to the table; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Brown risked losing popularity but ultimately raised the public conscience on issues that are just being discussed with some frequency in modern times, thus demonstrating that she has always been at least thirty years ahead of everyone else in her thinking and her capabilities; and

WHEREAS, growing up an orphan and disadvantaged, did not stop Dr. Brown from achieving her goals of becoming a physician and a legislator; and

WHEREAS, during her illustrious tenure in the House of Representatives, Dr. Brown sponsored legislation to establish insanity as a new grounds for divorce and other far-reaching and innovative legislation that significantly expanded women's rights in society; and

WHEREAS, she also was instrumental in co-sponsoring legislation to celebrate Negro History Week in Tennessee, which has evolved into the nationally celebrated Black History Month of February; in her own words, " the designation of the original week was important to recognize achievements and contributions by black Americans and to combat racism"; and

WHEREAS, the successful career of this legendary icon, who is nationally respected by the African American community, began with the completion of her undergraduate degree at the historically black Bennett College, where she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1941, after having received a four-year scholarship; she then earned her medical degree from Meharry Medical College in 1948; she would later serve at Meharry after completing her internship at Harlem Hospital in New York City from 1948-49, and has been honored by that fine institution by having a women's dormitory named in her honor; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Brown first decided to become a physician at the age of five, inspired by her experience during a tonsillectomy; after being rejected for a surgical residency at Harlem Hospital during a time in American history when women were not being admitted to such programs, she, no stranger to struggle, returned to Meharry, and convinced Dr. Matthew

Walker, the chief of surgery and another African American legendary hero, to accept her into the surgical residency program there; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Brown has said of Dr. Walker, "Dr. Matthew Walker was a brave man," because despite advice from his staff that a woman couldn't withstand the rigors of surgery, he accepted her into the program; she further stated, "I worked so hard, the other fellows called me 'Mule Brown' because I was definitely not going to fail"; and

WHEREAS, a devoted Christian, whose deeds have always been done without any personal agenda or desire for recognition, Dr. Dorothy Brown has received over 90 honors during her lifetime, including Outstanding Achievement Award-Golden Anniversary from Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated in 1963, Outstanding Service to Mankind Award from the Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, in Jackson, Tennessee in 1978, and she has received Proclamations declaring "Dr. Dorothy L. Brown Day" in Detroit, Troy, New York, and Proclamations from the Citizens of Metropolitan Nashville and Friendship Baptist Church in 1986; and

WHEREAS, a soror of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, which boasts an esteemed group of other accomplished, nationally recognized, ground-breaking African American women, Dr. Brown epitomizes the strong, black woman, who has *repeatedly* achieved the impossible simply because it has never occurred to her that she could not do so;

WHEREAS, she is the paragon of one whose life exemplifies the Ghanaian Symbol ***Gyenamae***, which means, "I will fear no one but God"; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we hereby honor and commend Dr. Dorothy Lazinia Brown, the quintessential Renaissance black woman, not only for the difficult duties she so graciously performed during her term as a member of this Tennessee General Assembly in the late 1960s,

but also for her remarkable career as the Southeast's first African American woman surgeon, and extend to her our heartfelt thanks for her august service to the people of Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.